

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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MR. SCARBOROUGH'S FAMILY.

BY ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

CHAPTER XXVI. MARMADUKE LODGE.

ON the seventh of next month two things occurred, each of great importance. Hunting commenced in the Puckeridge country, and Harry with that famous mare *Belladonna* was there. And Squire Prosper was driven in his carriage into Buntingford, and made his offer with all due formality to Miss *Thoroughbury*. The whole household, including Matthew, and the cook, and the coachman, and the boy, and the two housemaids, knew what he was going to do. It would be difficult to say how they knew, because he was a man who never told anything. He was the last man in England who, on such a matter, would have made a confidant of his butler. He never spoke to a servant about matters unconnected with their service. He considered that to do so would be altogether against his dignity. Nevertheless when he ordered his carriage, which he did not do very frequently at this time of the year, when the horses were wanted on the farm—and of which he gave twenty-four hours' notice to all the persons concerned; and when early in the morning he ordered that his Sunday suit should be prepared for wearing, and when his aspect grew more and more serious as the hour drew nigh, it was well understood by them all that he was going to make the offer that day.

He was both proud and fearful as to the thing to be done—proud that he, the Squire of Buston, should be called on to take so important a step; proud by anticipation of his feelings as he would return home a jolly thriving wooer—and yet a little fearful lest he might not succeed.

Were he to fail the failure would be horrible to him. He knew that every man and woman about the place would know all about it. Among the secrets of the family there was a story, never now mentioned, of his having done the same thing once before. He was then a young man, about twenty-five, and he had come forth to lay himself and Buston at the feet of a baronet's daughter who lived some twenty-five miles off. She was very beautiful and was said to have a fitting dower; but he had come back—and had shut himself up in the house for a week afterwards. To no human ears had he ever since spoken of his interview with Miss *Courteney*. The doings of that day had been wrapped in impenetrable darkness. But all Buston and the neighbouring parishes had known that Miss *Courteney* had refused him. Since that day he had never gone forth again on such a mission.

There were those who said of him that his love had been so deep and enduring that he had never got the better of it. Miss *Courteney* had been married to a much grander lover, and had been taken off to splendid circles. But he had never mentioned her name. That story of his abiding love was thoroughly believed by his sister, who used to tell it of him to his credit when at the rectory the rector would declare him to be a fool. But the rector used to say that he was dumb from pride, or that he could not bear to have it known that he had failed at anything. At any rate he had never again attempted love, and had formally declared to his sister that, as he did not intend to marry, Harry should be regarded as his son. Then at last had come the fellowship, and he had been proud of his heir, thinking that in some way he had won the fellowship himself, as he had paid the bills. But now

all was altered, and he was to go forth to his wooing again.

There had been a rumour about the country that he was already accepted; but such was not the case. He had never even asked. He had fluttered about Buntingford, thinking of it; but he had never put the question. To his thinking it would not have been becoming to do so without some ceremony. Buston was not to be made away with during the turnings of a quadrille or as a part of an ordinary conversation. It was not probable, nay, it was impossible, that he should mention the subject to anyone; but still he must visibly prepare for it, and I think that he was aware that the world around him knew what he was about.

And the Thoroughburies knew, and Miss Matilda Thoroughbury knew well. All Buntingford knew. In those old days in which he had sought the hand of the baronet's daughter, the baronet's daughter and the baronet's wife, and the baronet himself, had known what was coming, though Mr. Prosper thought that the secret dwelt alone in his own bosom. Nor did he dream now that Harry and Harry's father, and Harry's mother and sisters, had all laughed at the conspicuous gravity of his threat. It was the general feeling on the subject which made the rumour current that the deed had been done. But when he came downstairs with one new grey kid-glove on, and the other dangling in his hand, nothing had been done.

"Drive to Buntingford," said the squire.

"Yes, sir," said Matthew, the door of the carriage in his hand.

"To Marmaduke Lodge."

"Yes, sir." Then Matthew told the coachman, who had heard the instructions very plainly, and knew them before he had heard them. The squire threw himself back in the carriage, and applied himself to wondering how he should do the deed. He had, in truth, barely studied the words; but not, finally, the manner of delivering them. With his bare hand up to his eyes so that he might hold the glove unsoiled in the other, he devoted his intellect to the task; nor did he withdraw his hand till the carriage turned in at the gate. The drive up to the door of Marmaduke Lodge was very short, and he had barely time to arrange his waistcoat and his whiskers before the carriage stood still. He was soon told that Miss Thoroughbury was at home, and within

a moment he found himself absolutely standing on the carpet in her presence.

Report had dealt unkindly with Miss Thoroughbury in the matter of her age. Report always does deal unkindly with unmarried young women who have ceased to be girls. There is an idea that they will wish to make themselves out to be younger than they are, and therefore report always makes them older. She had been called forty-five, and even fifty. Her exact age at this moment was forty-two, and as Mr. Prosper was only fifty there was no discrepancy in the marriage. He would have been young-looking for his age, but for an air of ancient dandyism which had grown upon him. He was somewhat dry, too, and skinny, with high cheek-bones and large dull eyes. But he was clean, and grave, and orderly—a man promising well to a lady on the look-out for a husband. Miss Thoroughbury was fat, fair, and forty to the letter, and she had a just measure of her own good looks, of which she was not unconscious. But she was specially conscious of twenty-five thousand pounds, the possession of which had hitherto stood in the way of her search after a husband. It was said commonly about Buntingford that she looked too high, seeing that she was only a Thoroughbury and had no more than twenty-five thousand pounds.

But Miss Tickle was in the room, and might have been said to be in the way, were it not that a little temporary relief was felt by Mr. Prosper to be a comfort. Miss Tickle was at any rate twenty years older than Miss Thoroughbury, and was of all slaves at the same time the humblest and the most irritating. She never asked for anything, but was always painting the picture of her own deserts. "I hope I have the pleasure of seeing Miss Tickle quite well," said the squire as soon as he had paid his first compliments to the lady of his love.

"Thank you, Mr. Prosper; pretty well. My anxiety is all for Matilda." Matilda had been Matilda to her since she had been a little girl, and Miss Tickle was not going now to drop the advantage which the old intimacy gave her.

"I trust there is no cause for it."

"Well, I'm not so sure. She coughed a little last night, and would not eat her supper. We always do have a little supper. A despatched crab it was; and when she would not eat it I knew there was something wrong."

"Nonsense! what a fuss you make. Well, Mr. Prosper, have you seen your nephew yet?"

"No, Miss Thoroughbury; nor do I intend to see him. The young man has disgraced himself."

"Dear, dear; how sad!"

"Young men do disgrace themselves, I fear, very often," said Miss Tickle.

"We won't talk about it, if you please, because it is a family affair."

"Oh no," said Miss Thoroughbury.

"At least, not as yet. It may be—but never mind, I would not wish to be premature in anything."

"I am always telling Matilda so. She is so impulsive. But as you may have matters of business, Mr. Prosper, on which to speak to Miss Thoroughbury, I will retire."

"It is very thoughtful on your part, Miss Tickle."

Then Miss Tickle retired, from which it may be surmised that the probable circumstances of the interview had been already discussed between the ladies. Mr. Prosper drew a long breath, and sighed audibly, as soon as he was alone with the object of his affections. He wondered whether men were ever bright and jolly in such circumstances. He sighed again, and then he began: "Miss Thoroughbury!"

"Mr. Prosper!"

All the prepared words had flown from his memory. He could not even bethink himself how he ought to begin. And, unfortunately, so much must depend upon manner! But the property was unembarrassed, and Miss Thoroughbury thought it probable that she might be allowed to do what she would with her own money. She had turned it all over to the right and to the left, and she was quite minded to accept him. With this view she had told Miss Tickle to leave the room, and she now felt that she was bound to give the gentleman what help might be in her power. "Oh, Miss Thoroughbury!" he said.

"Mr. Prosper, you and I are such good friends, that—that—that——"

"Yes, indeed. You can have no more true friend than I am. Not even Miss Tickle."

"Oh, bother Miss Tickle; Miss Tickle is very well."

"Exactly so. Miss Tickle is very well; a most estimable person."

"We'll leave her alone just at present."

"Yes, certainly. We had better leave her alone in our present conversation."

Not but what I have a strong regard for her." Mr. Prosper had surely not thought of the opening he might be giving as to a future career for Miss Tickle by such an assertion.

"So have I for the matter of that, but we'll drop her just now." Then she paused, but he paused also. "You have come over to Buntingford to-day probably in order that you might congratulate them at the brewery on the marriage with one of your family." Then Mr. Prosper frowned, but she did not care for his frowning. "It will not be a bad match for the young lady, as Joshua is fairly steady, and the brewery is worth money."

"I could have wished him a better brother-in-law," said the lover, who was taken away from the consideration of his love by the allusion to the Annesleys. He had thought of all that, and in the dearth of fitting objects of affection had resolved to endure the drawback of the connection. But it had for a while weighed very seriously with him, so that had the twenty-five thousand pounds been twenty thousand pounds, he might have taken himself to Miss Puffle who lived near Saffron Walden, and who would own Smickham Manor when her father died. The property was said to be involved, and Miss Puffle was certainly forty-eight. As an heir was the great desideratum, he had resolved that Matilda Thoroughbury should be the lady in spite of the evils attending the new connection. He did feel that in throwing over Harry he would have to abandon all the Annesleys, and to draw a line between himself with Miss Thoroughbury and the whole family of the Thoroughburys generally.

"You mustn't be too bitter against poor Molly," said Miss Thoroughbury.

Mr. Prosper did not like to be called bitter, and in spite of the importance of the occasion, could not but show that he did not like it. "I don't think that we need talk about it."

"Oh dear no. Kate and Miss Tickle need neither of them be talked about." Mr. Prosper disliked all familiarity, and especially that of being laughed at, but Miss Thoroughbury did laugh. So he drew himself up, and dangled his glove more slowly than before. "Then you were not going on to congratulate them at the brewery?"

"Certainly not."

"I did not know."

"My purpose carries me no farther than

Marmaduke Lodge. I have no desire to see anyone to-day besides Miss Thoroughbury."

"That is a compliment."

Then his memory suddenly brought back to him one of his composed sentences. "In beholding Miss Thoroughbury I behold her on whom I hope I may depend for all the future happiness of my life." He did feel that it had come in the right place. It had been intended to be said immediately after her acceptance of him. But it did very well where it was. It expressed, as he assured himself, the feelings of his heart, and must draw from her some declaration of hers.

"Goodness gracious me, Mr. Prosper!"

This sort of coyness was to have been expected, and he therefore continued with another portion of his prepared words, which now came glibly enough to him. But it was a previous portion. It was all the same to Miss Thoroughbury, as it declared plainly the gentleman's intention. "If I can induce you to listen to me favourably, I shall say of myself that I am the happiest gentleman in Hertfordshire."

"Oh, Mr. Prosper!"

"My purpose is to lay at your feet my hand, my heart, and the lands of Buston." Here he was again going backwards, but it did not much matter now in what sequence the words were said. The offer had been thoroughly completed and was thoroughly understood.

"A lady, Mr. Prosper, has to think of these things," said Miss Thoroughbury.

"Of course I would not wish to hurry you prematurely to any declaration of your affections."

"But there are other considerations, Mr. Prosper. You know about my property?"

"Nothing particularly. It has not been a matter of consideration with me." This he said with some slight air of offence. He was a gentleman, whereas Miss Thoroughbury was hardly a lady. Matter of consideration her money of course had been. How should he not consider it? But he was aware that he ought not to rush on that subject, but should leave it to the arrangement of lawyers, expressing his own views through her own lawyer. To her it was the thing of most importance, and she had no feelings which induced her to be silent on a matter so near to her. She rushed.

"But it has to be considered, Mr. Prosper. It is all my own, and comes to very nearly one thousand a year. I think

it is nine hundred and seventy-two pounds six shillings and eightpence. Of course, when there is so much money it would have to be tied up somehow." Mr. Prosper was undoubtedly disgusted, and if he could have receded at this moment would have transferred his affections to Miss Puffle. "Of course you understand that."

She had not accepted him as yet, nor said a word of her regard for him. All that went, it seemed, as a matter of no importance whatever. He had been standing for the last few minutes, and now he remained standing and looking at her. They were both silent, so that he was obliged to speak. "I understand that between a lady and gentleman so circumstanced there should be a settlement."

"Just so."

"I also have some property," said Mr. Prosper with a touch of pride in his tone.

"Of course you have. Goodness gracious me! Why else would you come. You have got Buston, which I suppose is two thousand a year. At any rate it has that name. But it isn't your own?"

"Not my own?"

"Well, no. You couldn't leave it to your widow, so that she might give it to any one she pleased when you were gone." Here the gentleman frowned very darkly, and thought that after all Miss Puffle would be the woman for him. "All that has to be considered, and it makes Buston not exactly your own. If I were to have a daughter she wouldn't have it."

"No, not a daughter," said Mr. Prosper, still wondering at the thorough knowledge of the business in hand displayed by the lady.

"Oh, if it were to be a son, that would be all right, and then my money would go to the younger children, divided equally between the boys and girls." Mr. Prosper shook his head as he found himself suddenly provided with so plentiful and thriving a family. "That, I suppose, would be the way of the settlement, together with a certain income out of Buston set apart for my use. It ought to be considered that I should have to provide a house to live in. This belongs to my brother, and I pay him forty pounds a year for it. It should be something better than this."

"My dear Miss Thoroughbury, the lawyer would do all that." There did come upon him an idea that she, with her aptitude for business, would not be altogether a bad helpmate.

"The lawyers are very well; but in a transaction of this kind there is nothing like the principals understanding each other. Young women are always robbed when their money is left altogether to the gentlemen."

"Robbed!"

"Don't suppose I mean you, Mr. Prosper; and the robbery I mean is not considered disgraceful at all. The gentlemen I mean are the fathers and the brothers, and the uncles and the lawyers. And they intend to do right after the custom of their fathers and uncles. But woman's rights are coming up."

"I hate woman's rights."

"Nevertheless they are coming up. A young woman doesn't get taken in as she used to do. I don't mean any offence, you know." This was said in reply to Mr. Prosper's repeated frown. "Since woman's rights have come up a young woman is better able to fight her own battle."

Mr. Prosper was willing to admit that Miss Thoroughbury was fair, but she was fat also, and at least forty. There was hardly need that she should refer so often to her own unprotected youth. "I should like to have the spending of my own income, Mr. Prosper—that's a fact."

"Oh, indeed."

"Yes, I should. I shouldn't care to have to go to my husband if I wanted to buy a pair of stockings."

"An allowance, I should say."

"And that should be my own income."

"Nothing to go to the house?"

"Oh yes. There might be certain things which I might agree to pay for. A pair of ponies I should like."

"I always keep a carriage and a pair of horses."

"But the ponies would be my look-out. I shouldn't mind paying for my own maid, and the champagne, and my clothes, of course, and the fishmonger's bill. There would be Miss Tickle, too. You said you would like Miss Tickle. I should have to pay for her. That would be about enough, I think."

Mr. Prosper was thoroughly disgusted; but when he left Marmaduke Lodge he had not said a word as to withdrawing from his offer. She declared that she would put her terms into writing and give them to her lawyer, who would communicate with Mr. Grey. Mr. Prosper was surprised to find that she knew the name of his lawyer, who was in truth our old friend. And then, while he was still hesitating, she

astounded—nay, shocked him—by her mode of ending the conference. She got up, and throwing her arms round his neck, kissed him most affectionately. After that there was no retreating for Mr. Prosper, no immediate mode of retreat, at all events. He could only back out of the room, and get into his carriage, and be carried home as quickly as possible.

IN BONNIE SCOTLAND.

IX.

To go to bed in broad daylight, and, waking from the first doze, to see the hills faintly touched with the blush of dawn—such is night in Skye in the short but brilliant summer of these high latitudes. And now it is Sunday morning. A profound stillness everywhere—the stillness of a Scotch Sabbath. Even the cocks don't crow nor do the hens cluck, as far as one can hear, and the old colley, who is the first to greet me on coming down, has a subdued and thoughtful expression on his honest face. I am not the first down, however. A shrewd dogmatic-looking Scotchman is already seated on the bench outside the hotel, and in reply to my greeting of "A fine morning," replies cautiously: "Yes, it's fine eno', but I'm dootful about its lasting." Perhaps, indeed, there is a sort of tenderness in the morning light that presages a certain tearfulness later on. But at the present moment the sun is shining brightly over Raasay Island, while the long ripples of the incoming tide are spread in dark lines ever hurrying onwards in endless succession. The little town is at our feet, and the harbour with the massive headlands that mount guard over the entrance.

I have a kind of presentiment that the shrewd-looking Scot is no other than the hard-shelled uncle of whom Ronald has been writing. He is busy now over his order-book, and is turning over the leaves with a frowning thoughtful brow. Presently he shuts up his book with a snap, and fills and lights a pipe in a leisurely careful manner. His brow is unbent, and he looks even sociably disposed, and I feel that I ought to begin to make friends with him, but having ventured that little remark about the fine morning I don't feel as if I had got another subject handy. However, at last I hazard another remark to the effect that we had not seen him on our arrival last night. "And wass you wanting to see me?" asked the old carle rather

suspiciously. Oh, not at all, only that we missed the pleasure of making his acquaintance, and so on. "Well, to tell ye the truth," began the Scot, "I was over there by Scavaig. Perhaps ye'll be in the timber-line your own self?" with a renewed access of caution and mistrust. No, I had nothing to do with timber. If I had, what should I be doing in the Highlands, where you may find materials for a birch rod, indeed, or even a broom or two, and maybe a walking-stick with a fine crook at the end of it, but as for timber—well!

Mr. Ross, for that was his name—Angus Ross, hailing from Inverness, and Ronald's uncle as it turned out—Mr. Ross laughed good-humouredly at my depreciation of the native timber. He could afford to laugh, as it turned out, for he dealt in Norway deals himself; and it strikes me as curious that while the hills of Norway, the shores of its inlets and fiords, are clothed with timber which supplies half the world with planks and battens, the coast of Scotland, under similar climatic conditions and with a, perhaps, more favourable arrangement of land and water, should remain as bare as the palm of your hand.

But to return to Mr. Ross, who has lighted his pipe and is puffing away vigorously—a performance which does not impair in any way his parts of speech. Indeed, the short periods, pointed by puffs of tobacco-smoke, are exactly suited to his conversational powers.

"Aye, it's a fine morn, as ye were saying, and to look at yon bay that's sae smooth and pleasant now, ye'd never think of how it looks in winter-time, with maybe a stiff nor-east gale sending the swell down the sound, and the waves lashing up against yon headlands, and roaring up into the air with clouds of foam and torrents of white surf nigh up to the top of yon rugged cliff."

The picture made me shiver involuntarily, and Ross laughed low, and almost choked himself with tobacco-smoke, pleased with the effect of his eloquence. And then, finding he had an appreciative listener, he began a description of his winter journey among the islands—a voyage, say, from Shetland to the Orcades in a howling winter's gale; but presently diverged in a lamentable way to the account of a trial on which he served as a jurymen, and the remarks he made to the court, and how Lord Muddylaws tried to put him down, and the reply he made by which Muddy-

laws was covered with confusion. We were fairly in the middle of the trial, with no prospect of an agreement as to the verdict, when the two girls came out, Mary Grant and Jennie; and old Ross, whom nothing else could have moved to spare one word of the long-winded trial, broke off with the apology, "Mon, ye shall hear it all from the verra beginnin', when we're just to oor twa selves," and made his politest reverence to the two girls.

I think Jennie knew by some subtle instinct that this was the all-important uncle whom it was her business to conciliate, she received his old-fashioned gallantries with such sweetness. And then somebody proposed a short walk to the top of an eminence close by, whence there is a general view of sea and coast, and Mary Grant fell to my share, while Angus and Jennie walked off together, highly pleased with each other. At the top of the hill is a little ruined tower that gave rise to some speculation; it is not ancient exactly, but yet not built yesterday. Ross suggested that it was a whisky-tower, a trysting-place for the great drinking-bouts that were the main pastime of the smaller Hebridean chiefs. Or perhaps it is just a gazebo, built by some eccentric with a passion for panoramic views. A fine sweep of sea and sky and rough rock-bound coast; the cliffs breaking off suddenly into the abyss are clothed with luxuriant vegetation, and spangled with the blossoms of the wild rose, while fox-gloves and a host of other wild flowers riot luxuriantly in all the crevices of the rocks. "We'll have a fine appetite for breakfast, anyhow," said Angus; but, as far as the girls were concerned, I doubt whether the effect was quite realised, for coming back to the hotel, we met Uncle Jock in something of a temper. "D'ye think it seemly, lassies, to be walking and daffing here on the Sabbath morn?" and he hurried them in with quite unnecessary haste. Angus Ross made a face indicative of strong disgust. "If there's one thing more than another I've a contempt for, it's beegotry; and there's more than enough of it among us." It was suggested that the climate must have something to do with it, for that Jock Gillies is not nearly so rigid a disciplinarian when among the Gallios of the metropolis. But the fact was, Uncle Jock had discovered the presence of the young artist on the island, and considered himself as much aggrieved thereby. And he considered your humble servant as much to blame as

anybody, and consequently, when the gong sounded for breakfast, he seated himself and his party as far away as he could. All but Jennie, that is, who broke away and took her seat between the old timber-dealer and myself.

Now if Jennie had done this with the profoundest calculation, instead of at the impulse of the moment, she could not have made a better impression on Angus Ross. The old fellow was delighted. As for Mary she gave me one laughing glance out of her blue eyes that made my heart give quite a sudden leap. There is nothing like being in disgrace together to give people a sympathetic feeling for each other.

Sunday morning brings all the denizens of the hotel together, for if you don't come to the public breakfast you have to go without; such is the simple inexorable law. And consequently all the honeymooners were present. And Skye it seems is a great place of resort for the newly-married. It might be thought that they would be glad of the opportunity of seeing a few fresh faces. But no, they seemed still wrapped up in each other, and exchanged little signals of endearment and conveyed loving messages by symbolic arrangements of teaspoons and scones. There was an Irish family, too, with three unmarried daughters, who perhaps had the taste of sour grapes in the mouth as they watched the happy play of the dainty little brides; but perhaps again they were superior to that kind of thing altogether. There was a little apprehension among the guests as to future supplies of food, for notice was given that except for the table d'hôte dinner at half-past five, no other meal would be served. But the head waiter soothed all alarms. "Oh, ye shall have your lunches, never fear." "Just a biscuit, you know; if it were only a biscuit," suggested the Irishman. "But ye shall have your plentiful lunches," replied the waiter, "never fear for that." "Well, I'm glad to find there's no that beegotry among us all," said Mr. Ross aggressively, with a glance at Uncle Jock. "There's nothing more repugnant to a mind that's capable o' reasoning powers, than that blind beegotry that'll no' allow men their lawful enjoyments because it's the Sawbeth. Ye mustn't walk except to kirk; ye mustn't have your bit laugh; it's just these beegots that bring us into disrepute with foreigners."

Now if Mr. Ross thought to plant a barbed arrow in the breast of Uncle Jock by these remarks about bigotry, he was

disappointed. For Jock's withers were unwrung. In his anger he made a stalking-horse of the Sawbeth, but not being particularly rigid himself upon the point, he received the remarks of Mr. Ross with the utmost good humour. And the worthy Angus, whose soul thirsted for a wordy combat, was considerably disappointed thereat.

Hardly was breakfast over when a little bell began to clank in a rapid importunate way, and going out we saw a man standing outside the little kirk and pulling vigorously at a rope that hung from the little belfry. And presently there set in a little stream of people, old women in tartan shawls, and dour-looking old fellows in Highland bonnets and grey tweed suits. Not that the stream flowed undivided into the little kirk with the bell. There were two others, if not three, all within hail of each other, which divided the faithful of Skye pretty evenly among them.

"I'm no' for the kirk," said Angus; "I'm for a bit walk, for I've got to meet a neevy of mine."

At the mention of this nephew we all began to listen, Jennie especially, who bent upon Mr. Ross her eyes full of soft interest. And thereupon Angus began to expatiate upon his nephew. Our friend was not without family pride, and a certain tendency to boastfulness as to family connections and ramifications; and to hear him descant upon his nephew's triumphs and progress—how he carried off all the prizes of the London Acaudemy, while his pictures had created quite a furore in the world of art, you would think that Ronald was indeed some bright particular star. "But yon lad's got moore than talent, as I told his father, he's got genius, or I'm much mistaken, and he'll make the name of Ross distinguished in the land; and yon man, his father, he's my ain brother—a highly clever man is Dr. Ross, and stands perhaps at the verry top of his profession, but beegoted, as I tell him—would have shut him up in a pulpit and made a preaching-block of him. And what if he paints lassies without their sarks, as my poor brother canna thole the notion of; why, it's all art as I tell him, and the ways of art are no' just like a theological lecture."

"For all that," interposed Uncle Jock, who had now recognised the identity of his antagonist, "I think the good doctor was grandly right." And then, after a little clearing up of names and dates, and mutual connections and friendships, the two men

launched out into a determined argument on the subject of poor Ronald, pacing up and down in front of the hotel quite forgetful of time and scene.

"I'm sure, Jennie, that everything is going beautifully for you," cried Mary Grant. And then I proposed that while the elders were thus busily engaged in confabulation, we others should start on a walk towards Sligachan, and meet Ronald, who was no doubt walking over from that direction. We could not be expected to go to kirk, for the services were in Gaelic, and Mrs. Gillies allowed that if we walked along quietly, we might be allowed to make the expedition.

The country was wild, not to say desolate, and close by was the head of the loch, which you would have taken for some fresh-water pool, but for the bank of seaweed that bounded the margin and the wet mark where the tide was silently ebbing away. And just above high-water mark were the huts of a little settlement of cottars, who might well be taken for remnants of an earlier race, survivors we will say from the glacial epoch, who had not long ago left their caves and holes in the rocks to dwell by the sea-shore, so weirdly ancient-looking are the little weather-beaten huts, that have taken the hues of the rocks, as if they were so many huge limpets that were clinging there. But except for a few old crones, and a band of scantily-clothed but splendidly healthy children, there were no inhabitants to be seen. And an old lady who spoke English informed us that all the men were away reaping the harvest of the sea. Aye, and most of the women too, who had followed the men. And the men had followed the herrings, which in July cease to swarm among the lochs of the western coast; had followed them eastward past Cape Wrath, and round the stormy Pentlands, and were now shooting their nets in the North Sea. And the women—were they fishing too? Well no, they found employment in cleaning and packing the fish at Wick, or Banff, or Peterhead.

"That is the way, always," said Jennie, "the men get all the nice adventurous noble work, and the women the nasty drudgery; but we are going to change all that." "But ye canna change the ways of Providence, lassie," cried the old dame in some astonishment. And then we left the cottars' huts behind us, and climbed higher to where there was a pretty waterfall dashing down the rocks, and soon after we saw a

solitary figure approaching along the desolate track, which turned out to be Ronald himself.

Ronald in very good spirits, for he had got fairly at work upon his picture, the subject a wild corrie among the Cuchullin hills, that would take all his powers to reproduce its glowing grandeur. And Uncle Angus had been rather a brick on the whole, depreciating his work indeed, but offering substantial help in a way that promised to smooth over some of the difficulties in his path. On the other hand, Jennie had unfavourable news to communicate about Uncle Jock, how inexorable he was, and the indignation he had shown that Ronald should be meeting Jennie again. "We must take him out in the Firefly," said Ronald, "and then we'll give him the choice of giving his consent or being dropped overboard." And his friend Jemmie was working his yacht round to Portree, and Ronald had made up his mind that having made such a happy beginning to his picture, he could fairly take a couple of days' holiday to be happy with Jennie, rowing and sailing about, while his picture worked itself out in his mind.

While Jennie and her lover were talking over these things, Mary Grant and I walked on in front, and we fell into quite confidential conversation. She told me of her early life at Longashpan, when her father was yet alive. She hardly remembered her mother, who had died long before, and she the spoiled child of the house; of the boat she used to manage herself, and the wild little pony she used to ride. But father had been dead three years, still brightly remembered with something of a sob in the voice as she spoke of him, and an elder brother ruled at Longashpan with a wife who was—well, not very comfortable to live with. She had tried it for awhile, but would sooner be a hired servant than live there again, and now she was keeping house for Archie. But he would be married soon, perhaps, and then she would be adrift on the world. But adrift! No, there was no chance of that. Surely there was one heart somewhere that would be moved to try and hold her fast? Mary shook her head without speaking, and then said her companion:

"Was thou mine,
I wad wear thee in my bosom
Lest my jewel I should tine."

"Oh," cried Mary, blushing and trembling a little, "I'm afraid you've

said that to many another before now." Heaven knows how far the affair would have gone if we had not plumped upon the two uncles, who had come on their way to meet us, still arguing tooth and nail, although they had changed their ground a little. They were on the kirk now, some interminable question about some insoluble theological problem. Old Angus looked rather taken aback when he caught sight of Ronald and Jennie walking together on such comfortable terms. "Why, ye never told me, laddie, that you expected friends to meet ye." "I wasn't sure, you see, uncle," replied Ronald, looking rather foolish. Uncle Jock, making a virtue of necessity, gave Ronald a reluctant hand, and then would have plunged again into controversy. "There's a great inconsistency in that argument of yours, my friend." But Angus would no longer give battle; he had secured Jennie, sending away his nephew with good-humoured imperativeness. And Ronald attached himself to Mary, who, I flatter myself, did not want him, while Jock and I walked moodily along together.

Just then we topped a commanding eminence, whence we saw spread out before us the rugged coast-line of Skye, with rocky islands scattered over the sound, the sea a deep blue, with a solitary sail upon it, the white high-peaked sail of a yacht. "There are some there," said Uncle Jock, shaking his head, "who are not over mindful of the Sawbeth."

"Why, that is the Firefly!" cried Ronald, "and Jem is bringing her up to lie at Portree to-night."

"Aye," said Angus proudly, "ye see what it is to be an artist, Mr. Gillies, and consort with the greatness of the land. That's the Hon. James Fraser with his yacht, and it would be a long time before he'd ask you a' me, Jock Gillies, to foregather with him. But ye'll mind it was the proudest king in Christendom that stooped to pick up the artist's pencil."

It was amazing to witness such a fervid vein in the otherwise rigid breast of the hard-shelled Angus, a spirit of opposition to the supposed prejudices of Uncle Jock. "But I'm thinking," he went on, firmly astride of the high horse; "there's some connection betwixt our family and the Frasers. There was my own sister's son married a widow, and her husband's first wife had been first cousin to the late lord. Ye might mention that little circumstance to the right honourable when ye speak with him."

"You shall mention it yourself," replied Ronald good-humouredly; "he made me promise that you should come for a sail with us to-morrow."

"And I should be leaving the island the morn," cried Angus; "well, but it's not every day I'll go yachting with a right honourable. The people of Mull will just have to be without me for a day, that's all."

We had now reached the little high-street of Portree, with its row of white-washed cottages looking over the cliff, and little bit of a court-house and gaol poked up in a corner. The white cottages are all done up wonderfully neat and bright, with knockers and door-mats, and all kinds of modern appliances, all ready for lodgers; and there is MacPhail's big shop—a universal store, where all things, from needles to anchors, are ready to the hand. And there is the bank with its brass-plate, and again another bank with another brass-plate, and a third a little further on, and perhaps others if we dived deeper into the matter, but in the way of kirks and banks the poorest place is sure to be amply provided.

And then the church-bell begins again—the same sturdy Highlander jerking doggedly the long rope from the belfry—and I propose to Mary Grant that we shall go to church.

It is a quiet sleepy little kirk, the plainest arrangement of bricks and boards that can possibly be conceived, all painted yellow, with a gallery where two or three people are sitting—out of a spirit of independence, for there is ample room below for all the congregation thrice told. Mary and I get seats on a handsome deal ledge with a high straight back distressing to the spinal column. There are two or three shepherds present, in grey tweed, and with wrinkled weather-beaten faces. And there is the agent of the bank—of one of the three, that is—with a few other notables of the town. And then the minister enters in a stately way in Geneva gown and bands, and marches up the pulpit-stairs—a pulpit that harmonises with the other decorations of the building—and then from a square pen in the middle of the kirk you hear the feeble note of a pitch-pipe, and the choir of youths and maidens strike up a hymn, or rather a paraphrase, which I take to be something in the way of a psalm. We all sit, except the choir, as if we were being sung to, and were expected to enjoy the treat. And then everybody stands up for prayer. Then there is the sermon, a good length, and

good, no doubt, in substance, but hardly containing a single idea that I can assimilate with those I have already in stock. One wants a new set of faculties altogether to get to the bottom of Scotch theology.

But always a vague sense of well-being, and surely a healthy appetite, await the dutiful attendant at kirk as soon as he gets out, with a feeling of high spirits suddenly relieved from strong pressure. Mary runs away as soon as we get back, and I join the tobacco symposium on the bench. And this time Angus pins me into a corner, and will have the whole story out of the trial before Lord Muddylaws. Happily in the middle of it the gong sounds for dinner, and I secure a seat by Mary Grant with a thankful heart. Ah, how ambrosial was the banquet that night in the Isle of Skye.

A MIDWAY MILESTONE.

"COME down," the simple letter says,
"And keep your Sabbath birthday here,
Come down and hear the church bells ring,
And hear the song the thrushes sing

Among the leafy bowers ;
Come forth from dreary city ways,
And glad us with your presence, dear,
And longed-for as the summer flowers.

"Come down, and we will take once more
The heathy path across the hill ;
Or saunter through the dewy lane,
Wherein we parted with such pain
A little year ago.

The heath is sweet with honey store,
The fair green lane is dewy still,
And I—I long to see you so !

"Come down, and we will sit again
Beside the milestone grey and old,
That stands without our garden gate,
The spot where I was wont to wait,
And listen, while your feet
Passed to the highway from the lane,
And my heart seemed too full to hold
Its tender bliss, so new and sweet."

I sit me in the summer dusk,
The sultry dusk of city ways,
I put the letter from my hand,
And memory brings at my command
The past before mine eyes.
I see a garden, sweet with musk
And lilies, wrapped in silver haze,
And sleeping under summer skies.

A garden gateway, clothed about
With cream and crimson woodbine flowers,
And in the copse across the way,
The bird that singeth not by day,
Chants of her cruel fate.

The long white highway stretches out,
And faint pink eglantine embowers
A milestone by the garden gate.

A stone that on its ancient face
A magic number shows to me,
In quaint old figures mossy-brown,
So many miles to London town—

So many years have I ;
Ah, little girl ! the barren space
Of my spent youth 'twixt me and thee,
For evermore must coldly lie.

I think the moonlight touched my brain
That summer night a year ago ;

Though sweet thy love, I had no right
To win the sacred blossom white
Of thy pure girlish heart ;
Thy tears fell down like summer rain,
To hear me tell my tale of woe,
Would God they could have healed the smart !

Would God that to my empty home,
Where sombre shadows come at will,
Mine hand could lead thee, to dispel
The doleful memories that dwell
Beside its hearthstone cold ;
Or would that I with thee could roam
The dewy lane, the heath-clad hill,
And sit beside the milestone old.

Would God, sweet child, that I could share
The simple glee that fills thine heart,
That all the griefs and all the tears
That filled my life of forty years,
Might pass like morning dew ;
Would God that I could pray thy prayer,
From all the world's illusions part,
And twine thy roses with my rue.

"Is it too late ?" my heart cries out ;
"Too late, too late !" I make reply ;
I had no right to speak of love,
The eagle mates not with the dove,
I know the truth to-night ;
I see the way too clear for doubt,
I lay the simple letter by ;
The midway milestone fades from sight.

If I have harmed thee, gentle child,
I will not deepen yet the wrong ;
I could not quit my busy strife
To share thy simple country life ;
The freshness of my soul
Has faded in world-pathways wild ;
Pass on, and sing thy simple song,
I am too rough for love's control.

I could not sit in peaceful ease
With thee among the garden flowers ;
Nor could I sip—whose lips have quaffed
Life's strongest wine—the simple draught
Thou offerest gay and glad ;
The soothing murmur of the trees,
The incense of the woodbine bowers,
Year after year, would drive me mad !

And so I lay thy letter down,
And keep my birthday here apart ;
Pass on, my little darling, free,
A brighter future waits for thee
In life's untrodden ways ;
Pass on, and win thy woman's crown
And kingdom, in a youthful heart ;
God give thee good, and length of days !

And I, life's midway milestone past,
What more with love have I to do ?
My heart's lone memories, bitter-sweet,
Bestrew the ground before my feet,
Like wrecks on winter's sea ;
God grant the young their dreams may last,
Mine early died—yet love is true
I well believe, though dead for me !

OLD-FASHIONED WEATHER.

RICHARD (And he was at Bosworth) : Give me a
Calendar !

Who saw the sun to-day ?

RATCLIFFE : Not I, my lord.

RICHARD : Then he disdains to shine ; for, by the
book,

He should have brav'd the east an hour ago.

It was an angry outburst, an angry
denunciation, because the skies were grey
and without radiance, were hanging low
and threatening over those Leicestershire

slopes and runnels and spinneys, on the 22nd of August, 1485. Let the date be particularly noted, because it is very well known that there never were any dull and colourless days in the Augusts of long ago. Summers were summers then; winters were winters.

"Why," is the cry of everybody, "when I was young, we never used to have this kind of weather! The summers used to melt us! They were hot and hot; they were blazing; we would drive in the shade; we could not face the fierce blazing of the sun; there was scarcely air to breathe!"

And winter?

"Ah, winter! Glorious old winter! Snow, ice, frost, icicles. White fields, white rivers, white hills, white roads. Trees feathered with crisp fallings; rime, hoar; water that had to be hammered; milk turned out of basins in blocks that you could hurl like cannon-balls; meat changed to red and yellow streaky stone. Inspiring brightness in the air, rosiest cheeks, snow-balls, ice statues, games full of fun and mischief and jollity; weeks of it, weeks; not one day a frost and the next slops; but weeks; and all glory!"

Anything intermediate?

"Yes, autumn. A rich golden autumn, full of brown harvest and a silver moon. And as for spring, it was one long May-day, with may-poles and may-feastings; and flowers in garlands; and dancing on the green; and curds and whey; and sitting on the banks; and gathering nose-gays; and the girls in white; and the little lambs; and everything rejoicing. And what is more, it had been just as I say it was, in my father's and mother's time; and in their fathers' and mothers' time, and in their fathers' and mothers' before that. I have often and often, I have again and again, heard them say so."

It ought to be conclusive; and it would be, if the glorifying power of youth were not conclusive, also; if the splendid gift of retrospection did not include the even more splendid gift of only fragmentary retrospection, so that mere flashes of events come back to the mind, so that some momentary radiance, shorn of drawback, or blot, or gloom, or discord, gives radiance to a whole season, possessing the power to annihilate the drearinesses and roughnesses that came before the radiance—possessing the power to annihilate the drearinesses and roughnesses that, wearisomely enough, could not have failed

to have come after. So let us attempt to see what old-fashioned weather really was. Let questions about the weather, that is, be put into an arena that is the arena likely to render fairly reliable answers. In short, let the cry be, "Give me a calendar!" just as Shakespeare made it King Dickon's cry, on the morning of that memorable Bosworth battle. For, though calendars but predicted weather, yet predictions, it is known, keep within probabilities rigidly. Predictions of weather, moreover, beyond all other predictions, never pointed to anything but what was thoroughly normal, failing, when they did fail, not on the score of utter falsity and extravagance, but merely on the minor matter of short difference between the moments of fulfilment and expectation. Let a calendar be brought, therefore, and when brought, let it be looked at with interest.

Here is one, as it chanced, printed for 1487. It is so near to Richard's speech that it was being prepared when Bosworth battle was little over twelve months old. A large wide-spread sheet this calendar is, with red letters and with black letters, both colours having been diverted into significance in the history of almanacs and of printing. It is as early, possibly, as any calendar or any almanac that was ever printed at all, yet it can be read as easily as if it had been issued for the present year. The twelve months are set out on it: Jenner, for January; Horuag, for February; Mertz; Apprill; Mey; Brachmond (June); Heymond (July); Augst; Herbstmond (September); Veinmond (October); Vintermond (November); Cristmond—Christ's Moon, with a beautiful poetry—(December). So are there especial spaces on the broad-sheet for the Neumondt, the new moon; for the Volmond, the full moon; and festival days are put down. For example: "Oster," for Easter. For example again: "Am abend und Thome apostoli"—each item, in its charming legibility, giving direct and pleasant invitation. For all that, it must be put aside. It is German. It was printed at Ingoldstadt. Such weather as it will point to will be German weather, valueless for the present purpose of ascertaining English weather, and it must go.

Take another specimen. This fragment merely; headed, where the heading is left, In Gottes Namen Volget nach die tafel des Jars Christi, Mcccxcvii (1497?). No. It will not do. It is still German. And so

is this next, for 1521; "Gestruckt" (struck off), as it says it was, in der Kayserlichen stat Augspurg, by Erhardt. It is even more engaging than the first; for it goes so much into detail, it says: "Jenner hat xxxi tag, Hornung hat xxviii tag," and so on; for it announces the weather with fine precision; as, when on the twenty-sixth Weinmon (October) it speaks of the change of moon bringing rain and wind, with the succeeding days being cold and dry (anfang feucht mit regen und wind, die andern tag kalt und trüb). But again this weather is German weather. And a degree's difference in place or position, or half-a-degree's difference—nay, or fractions of half-a-degree's difference, had immense, had even vital, import in these marvellous and delicate computations. Rectified for the Elevation of the Pole Articke and Meridian of Great Yarmouth in Norff., is a specimen of the usual preamble to an English calendar; or, Rectified for the Meridian of the famous Citie of London, where the Pole Artick is Elevated fifty-one degrees and thirty-two minutes. And where it was necessary for Norfolk and for Middlesex, districts so near, to show that a separate gentleman, or student, or practitioner in physicke and chirurgery, had computed for each such separate and several computations as gave the only chance of complete and thorough instruction, it would indeed be unfair to fuse together such widely distant countries as Germany and England, daring to make fine prognostications arrived at for the one, serve to note events that came to pass in the other.

And there is no need, either, for any such indiscriminate generalisation. Here is an Almyneck and Pronostication for 1530, in serviceable English. It is nothing that it was Emprinted at Antwerpe by me, Cristofel of Rurenionde. It is nothing that it was "rectified" (if that be the right word) by Gaspar Laet The Yonger, Docter yn Physic (the De Laets being a learned Antwerp family, one of whom, afterwards, disputed with Grotius). It has the orthodox Dieu et mon Droit to grace it; it has the Honi soit qui mal y pense intermingled; it has the English Rose (white and red both, for sure, had it attempted colour) to embellish these mottoes—not omitting the still lawful fleur-de-lys.

This old-fashioned weather was to range itself always into four separate and distinct divisions in each month; one division for every division, or change, of the moon. It is precisely what could have

been supposed. "Thy complexion shifts to strange effects, after the moon." Accordingly, the Januarie weather of 1530 stands thus: In the first moon-phase, Misty reyne with colde; in the second, Temperat cold and fresing; in the third, Temperat according to the tyme; in the last, Chaungeabil and tempestious. The Februarie variations stand: Cold with moysture, Troubelous and wyndy; As byfore; and Colde with wynde and intemperat. Marche became, Temperat after the tyme, sumwhat wynde; Troubelous with wynde; Reyne cold and variacyon; Temperat after the tyme. Aprill became, As byfore but mysty; Mesural moysture; As byfore; Good weder with moysture. May (and this is a test most weighty, most conspicuous) was, in its first week, As byfore, troubelous—and this first week holding May Day!—was, in its second week, Chaungeabil with colde; in its third, Colde and windy; in its fourth, Temperat and moyst. Juyn (almost as destructively) was, at first, As byfore with wynde; next, Varyabil and some dele wyndy; next, As byfore; lastly, Temperat hete. Julius (a little nearer to report, affording the requisite groundwork for it) was, Drawing to hete and moysture; Good weder sumwhat warm; As byfore but dryer; Varyabil with hete. Augustus (going as wrong as wrong could be, again) was, As byfore troubelous; Sumtyme colde, sumtyme hete, chaungeabil; Good applying to moysture; Sumwhat moyst and windy; giving a fifth change—the month being long, and an extra sumwhat being bound to be squeezed in somewhere—As byfore, but varyabil. September was, Wyndy temparat with colde; Troubelous and sumtyme not cold; Variabil out of mesure with thunder; sumwhat colde with variacion. October became, Chaungeabil wyndy with colde; Wyndy as byfore and darke; Evyll weder troubelous; Reyne and cold. November—but stay a moment. There runs a shiver through September and October and there might. For 1530 is the year when Wolsey—his word flouted at, instead of hung upon—after wretchedly shifting, or wretchedly being shifted, from London to Esher, from Esher to Winchester, from Winchester to Cawood, was being compelled to make one more wretched shift from Cawood to Leicester, through the sloppy shires. And, further: 1530 being the year (Catherine not yet divorced, only insultingly put aside, and Anne Boleyn radiantly expectant), November was the month when Wolsey was forced to

perform this wretched final shifting, the Earl of Northumberland being the power at hand to hedge him, and his warrant that high-treacherous accusal of high treason. And what the weather was that was whirling and sweeping outside the old man's litter in those last dishonoured days acquires a significance that is tragic. Listen to it. When the month was in the first quarter, November was chaungeabill, colde, wyndy; when she was in her second quarter, there was reyne to fall, and colde to give the rain fuller misery. When the moon was in the third quarter—Nottinghamshire being paced through by the disgraced old man, Leicestershire being close ahead—the month was wyndy and colde. As the sorrowful miles succeeded one another, as there came more and more of dread anticipation, as Leicester city, with its abbey, appeared in sight—as the moon had reached her last quarter, and the twenty-eighth day of the month had come, and Leicester Abbey was there—its gates flung reverently open, its monks reverently kneeling to Wolsey as he cried out: "Take me! I have come to lay down my bones! And would that I had served my God as faithfully as I have served my King!" November's wind and November's cold were still there to bleach the dying face and wither it. The Calendar's words are, "Holdit his nature as byfore." Following which, there is but December to note; with, first, its Applying to colde and snowe; next, its Moyst with snowe; next its Fresing windy and applying to snowe; lastly, its Moyst with wynde; and the yere 1530 has been lived through, yielding much that was wanted, and yielding nothing that has not been thankfully received.

But it will be said, and said vehemently, and with some irony: "One year is nothing. Does a swallow make a summer?"

All right. "Give me a calendar" again. Here is one that will do as excellently as the last. It is An Almanake and Pronostication for the yere of our Lorde M,LLLLL and XXXVII. (1537) ("Ester Daye" in it, it is interesting to note, having fallen on the 1st of April), and what does it show? The first quarter of January was Colde with snowe; the second quarter was Moyst and great snowe; the third was Reyen with wynde; the fourth was Dry and temperat. The first quarter of February was Moyste and meatly warm; the second, Moyste and froste; the third,

Cold and wyndy; the fourth, Moyst. March was Moysti and misty weder; Dry and temperat weder; Moysti weder after the time; Colde and wyndi. April (the Easter week) was Colde and moyst; then Wyndi; then Variable and wyndi; then Moyst and wyndi. May was Lusty and drye, at first—which must have been a joy, indisputably—but the second division of it was Inclinat to cold and reyen; the third was Variable and thonder; the fourth was Wyndi and mysti; the fifth, Moysti. June was Wyndi and variable; was Moyst and wyndi; had Reyen and wynde, and great tempest; was Varyable. In July the weather was still Moyst; and Wynde; and Varyable and wynde; and Moyst and varyable. In August it was Wyndi; Moyst and thonder; Moyste and stormy weder; Wynde and colde. In September it was Moyste and Wynde; Darke and wynde; Moyste and wynde. Moisture, enough, of a surety. With it, too, there were executions—of Sir Robert Constable, Sir John Bulmer, Sir Thomas Percy, and more—at Lincoln and on Tower Hill, making things sadder and more dismal. Indeed, there seems to fall so much sadness, so much dismalness, it may be asked, Is it any omen?—does it portend anything? From practitioners of physicke and chirurgery, from prognosticators, calculators, the wise—the weather-wise—the mysterious, the necromantic, of those Tudor days, there would come a "Yes," straight. For here is October, with the first quarter of it Moyst and wynde; here is its second quarter Cold and moyst; and on the tenth day of the month, this second quarter just in, here is Jane Seymour—that cold and that moisture penetrating to her, finding their way through arras and portière, through jewelled screen and gold-embroidered curtain, unable to be kept from her, spite of flaming log and andiron, spite of the fevered watchfulness of a royal husband and an interested nation—here is Jane Seymour giving birth to her little Edward, and here, on the twelfth day, is her fair motherhood all over, and her poor young body stretched and dead. It seems fit that the rest of October should be Moyst, wyndi, and colde; should be stricken with Wynde and colde. It seems fit that November should be Moyst and wyndi; Dark and Froste; Froste; and Froste and winde. That December should be marked Wynde and snow; and Cold moyst; and Moyste and wynde; and Moyst and colde. For, with Henry's divorce of Catherine useles

again, with Henry's execution of Anne Boleyn useless, and rising up to affright him, with his untimely marriage of Jane thus brought to an untimely end, England itself, in the "conceit" of the time, must have been full of tears, and the heavens were only playing a proper part in keeping England company.

But even now there will leap up, probably, the incredulous and antagonistic cry: "Absurd! Even two years are nothing! Is that trifling amount of evidence to upset conviction?"

Well, and even now there can be no difficulty in getting as much more evidence as can possibly be desired. "Give me a calendar," once more. Or, to vary the cry from that that issued violently from a battle-tent to that that was heard pleasantly on a peaceful midsummer night, "A calendar! a calendar! Look in the almanac! Find out moonshine, find out moonshine!" And as Quince produces the almanac, poring over it for the right column, and right month, and right day, answering Snug's question, "Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?" with "Yes, it doth shine that night," a head shall be thrust over his rustic shoulder, to look at what he looks at, and to take good scrutiny of all else that there is besides. In strict consistency, too, this third English Calendar, being for 1568, is the only one in which direct Shakespearian interest effectively exists. It is because Shakespeare was in the world in 1568, four years old; whereas the previous weather that has been chronicled was weather of so very old a fashion that when its "meately" warmth gave English people hilarity, and its winter "snowe" made English people shudder, not even Shakespeare's father and mother had yet trod the Wellingcote "crofts," or been dreamt of among woolstaplers, or in the Stratford-upon-Avon Corporation. Direct interest of another sort, also, lies in this Almanac for 1568. It is of English birth. Imprinted at London, by Richard Jugge, Dwellinge at the north doore of Pouls, is the clear signature to it. A link links it on, in good literary manner, to the Dutch—"Emprented" "Almynacke" of 1530, for all that. Gaspar Laet, it will be recollected, was the authority, in the 1530 issue, for the Mesural moysture of Aprill, for the Varyabill and some dele wyndy "weder" of Juyn; so it was "Alphonsus Laet, brother of M. Jasper Laet, Doctor in

Physicke and Astronomy," who consulted sun, moon, and stars for the "Pronostications" of 1568, and vouched for their infallible accuracy. Family connection, it will be observed; family honourable reputation having monetary value, and being prominently brought forward for legitimate business ends; and this at a date when Rizzio and Darnley had been only a few months murdered, when Mary was Bothwell's wife, and she, unwifed again, was actually at Loch Leven, preparing for her escape. It is a strange medley of the actualities of life and the romance of it. But such strangeness is never absent; it is only, many times and again, sunk fathom deep out of realisation. And bound in all these ways to this calendar of 1568, and bound in all these ways intimately, let it be examined.

Unluckily, January is gone from it; March is gone from it; May is gone. One side of the top half of the sheet (the months going up and down, up and down alternately) has been torn away. This makes February's weather the first weather that is available. It is Cold, hayle, and snow; Cold wyth snow; Temperate. April comes next. It is Temperate; it turns to Wynd; it turns to Rayn. June follows. It is Fayr; it is Thunder; it is Variable; it is Fayre and hote. July. It is Hote; it is Hote; it is Hote; it is Fayr; for Alphonsus Laet had learned English brevity in calculating almanacs for Richard Jugge to sell at the north doore of Pouls; he had not the foreign disquissitiveness of his brother Jasper. And here in August it is Fayre; it is Hote; it is Fayre again. Here is September, Hote; Tempest; Fayr; Temperate. October: Rain; Rayn; Rayn; Rayn; the only variety being in the spelling. November: Cold; Cold; Cold; Rayn and Wynd. December: Cold; Frost; Cold and Snow; Cold.

There are no rigidly-defined barricades severing heat from cold here, surely; making it clear that weather, formerly, knew its manners; never dreaming of letting winter become half like summer, and summer half like winter. Yet was it not

When icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail;
When blood is nipp'd, and ways be foul.

When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian's nose looks red and raw.

—was it not this that was what Shakespeare said of winter when he had had a few more than four birthdays?—when he, having seen wool-stapling in the intervals of his school-going, could say, “He draweth out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument;” could go on ruminating, “Let me see: Every eleven wether (so many) tods; every tod yields (so many) pound and odd shillings; with one thousand five hundred shorn, what comes the wool to?” Yes. But Shakespeare’s weather was not computed, calculated, rectified, “emprented,” or “gestruckt,” for good pennyworths at Paul’s door. That is, Shakespeare’s weather was not weather that was lived through, felt through, suffered through; watched, from day to day, and hour to hour, to see when would be the right moment to saunter by the Avon’s side, and when it would be best to keep the seat on the broad oak-settle by the “sea-coal fire.” It was the generalisation of weather. It was the weather of a momentary picture; the same as everybody else’s (past) weather is the weather of a momentary picture; long days and weeks and months having no place upon the canvas, either by sentiment or canon.

Almanacs are “riff-raff books,” was Bodley’s judgment during Shakespeare’s life; when Shakespeare was not yet Shakespeare, however, to anybody, but when Bodley was drawing literature together to form his library. “I can see no Good Reason,” he reiterates, “to alter my Opinion for excluding such Books as Almanacks.” No. And the rest of the world sees no good reason to alter its opinion for excluding the remembrance of the weather that almanacs report. Holding to the main divisions of the year, holding to the main characteristics of the months, the world is satisfied that the division and characteristics were, at one time, kept to inexorably, in detail. Here are these main characteristics of the months, in emblematic pictures, on an Almanac Sheet the date of which, judging by method and costume, was still Shakespearian, and 1600. A double-headed man stands before a banquet, taking the covers off the meats, to represent January; it was the season for the table and good-cheer. A man on a stool represents February; he has taken off one shoe, and holds the unshod foot, and both his hands, close to a blazing fire. It is “evyll weder” out of doors, and shelter is acceptable. A girl represents March. She is in a garden that

has palings round it, with here and there a timber alcove; and she is hoeing. It is time to prepare the ground. In April, a man ploughs, his plough drawn by two horses. In May, a girl, seated, takes a bath in a tub in a garden, holding a small tree-bough in her hand. In June, a man chops wood, his axe swung far and high behind him, with strong muscle. It is time to thin the forests, foliage being thick. In July, a man has his scythe out cutting grass, flowers shooting up amongst it freely. In August, a girl uses a sickle Norma-like, only cutting straight-up close-grown corn. In September a man is gathering grapes, a wine-press near. In October, a man is upon a ladder gathering apples from the tree, a full sack erect upon the ground, a basket for the immediate gathering hanging on a branch. In November, a man chops again, great lying tree-trunks this time, the living trees of background quite bare. It is time to think of shelter, timber being universal for it (mainly), timber being abundant, and needing the seasoning which winter will give time for. In December, a man is ready to heave his hatchet down upon an animal’s throat, a lad holding the poor brute’s head back to receive the blow. It is time for preparation for the indoor revelry that in due course will begin in the January again. There is interest in these pictures—little circular headings as they are—for two reasons. First, because of the individual suggestions of Stuart life they show; secondly, because of the further proof they afford that there has been no displacement of seasons, or striking alteration of seasons, as is apt to be thought because details of bygone seasons have passed out of the mind, since here are months in old-fashioned weather bringing practically the same succession of crops and labour that months practically are bringing now. “The year begins with fierce storms, windy weather at sea,” says Astrologer Lilly himself, the English Merlin, in his Almanack for 1647. In the April of it, “We may expect showers and cold blasts, winds and great cold, not a little hurting our fruit” (and well that “our fruit” could even get a mention; with rebels here, and rebels there, and Cromwell trampling through the counties, and Charles put to flight); and so on. There is no difference in it, in the gross. “This was a most exceeding wet yeare,” says John Evelyn of the next year, 1648, “neither frost nor snow all the Winter for more than six days in all; cattle died

every where of murrain." Does that look like winter being winter invariably, and winter being invariably crusted in ice for all a long winter through? There came exceptional seasons, when weather did keep to one expression for several weeks. For instance, there was the extreme severity of 1684, recorded also by Evelyn, when "coaches plied from Westminster to the Temple on the Thames, and from several other staires to and fro, as in the streets; sleds, sliding with skeetes, a bull-baiting, horse and coach-races, puppet-plays and interludes . . . a printing presse . . . all sorts of trades and shops," and what not. There was a marked winter in 1716, after as many as thirty-two years, let it be observed; there was another in twenty-three years more, 1739; there was one in 1762. This one can be seen by the brilliant light of Horace Walpole. On February the 2nd, he, the Duke of York, Lord Hertford, and the Ladies Northumberland and Mary Coke, went in a hackney-coach to Cock Lane, to see the ghost, and the winter was so far of the ordinary type of winters that "it rained torrents;" but on the 22nd day of the month things changed. Says Walpole, "As we have never had a rainbow to assure us that the world shall not be snowed to death, I thought last night was the general connixation. We had a tempest of wind and snow for two hours beyond any thing I remember. Chairs"—sedan-chairs, of course—"were blown to pieces, the streets covered with tassels, and glasses, and tiles; and coaches and chariots were filled like reservoirs. . . . It is a week of wonders, and worthy the note of an almanack-maker."

It is not at all necessary to multiply these rarities. Let it only be remembered that they were rarities; and let the mind be kept in the attitude to acknowledge that, when weather has made a deep impression, it most likely was a rarity, or the deep impression never would have been made. In 1762, as a fact supporting this, Walpole was forty-four years old, yet says the tempest was "beyond anything" he could remember. It was not normal. What, in truth, was normal in the weather lived through and recorded by Walpole, was precisely what is normal in the weather of these years now. It is May the 4th, he says, "as they call it, but the weather and the almanack of my feelings affirm it is December." That was in 1754. On May the 19th, two years after, he says, "I believe the French have taken the sun." Yet

he can say, on October the 21st, 1759: "I have not dined or gone to bed by a fire till the day before yesterday. It is still all gold. . . . I call it this ever warm and victorious year." This shows that there could be cold springs, that there could be warm autumns, in the centuries that have gone. "Nothing lasts now but the bad weather," Walpole cries again. "The cold and the wet have driven me back to London," from his dear "County of Twicks." And his general opinion was that English weather did very well if "framed and glazed," that is, if it could be endured, or lived through, where the damp of it was well screened away.

"Her passions . . . are greater storms and tempests than almanacks can report," says Antony of Cleopatra. How good it is that almanacs did report! And let the old-fashioned weather that they show, henceforth be accepted as reality.

SLIPSHOD KNOWLEDGE.

IN a debate during the last agitation for Reform, Mr. John Bright compared a certain clique in the House of Commons to the occupants of the "Cave of Adulam." A reference to the newspapers of the time will show that by many persons the allusion was supposed to be classical (doubtless from the appearance of the phrase), and the fact that it was scriptural dawned but slowly on the public mind. This is one example of many instances of the slipshod nature of public knowledge. Many quotations which have become "old sayings," are attributed to the Bible or to Shakespeare, according to the likeness they bear either to the expressions of Holy Writ, or to the writings of the great dramatist, and the supposed connection has been so often reiterated that it has become generally accepted or taken for granted, few persons ever thinking of doubting the relationship, and fewer still troubling to enquire into the matter. "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," was long attributed to the Psalms of David, until oft-repeated corrections have convinced people that the sentiment belongs to Maria in Laurence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*. The epigram, "Spare the rod and spoil the child," is still often quoted as one of the Proverbs of Solomon, and is rarely attributed to its author, Butler (see *Hudibras*, Part II., canto 2, line 843). The nearest

approach to any such phrase to be found in the Bible is the text, "He who spareth the rod hateth his son" (Prov. xiii., 24). The reference to "pouring oil on troubled waters" is often supposed to be scriptural, though the Bible does not make any such allusion. "Man wants but little here below," is an expression no older than Goldsmith's *Hermit*, though it is generally quoted either as scripture or as a line from an ancient hymn. "Mansions of the blest" are mentioned in the Revelations, not of St. John the Divine, but to the Monk of Evesham (A.D. 1496).

The critic who complained of *Hamlet*, that it was "too full of quotations," did not generalise more erroneously in attributing to others what belongs to Shakespeare than do those who attribute to Shakespeare what is due to other writers. "Richard's himself again," and "Off with his head, so much for Buckingham," are certainly to be found in Richard III., but they are in Colley Cibber's play, not in Shakespeare's; while on the other hand "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse," so often quoted as Colley Cibber's, was actually written by Shakespeare. The instances of this inexactness are very numerous. The Bible is credited with many things written by Pope; many of the utterances of Sancho Panza are put down to Shakespeare; while the galaxy of epigrams in Stephen Gosson's *School of Abuse* (A.D. 1579) are attributed to almost every one but the author of them.

Phonics are a fruitful source of error. The sound of a word often leads astray those who acquire knowledge in a slipshod fashion. People have long been familiar with the cocoa-nut or fruit of the palm-tree; but it is only within the last few years that they have become acquainted with the beverage obtained from the cacao shrub. The result has been that the word "cocoa" is used for the product of both plants, and many people think that both the nut and the "nibs" have the same source; thus similarity of sound causes a complete misapprehension. A more serious error is in regard to the etymology of the word "Bombay." To those acquainted with the Romanic languages, the word has certainly the appearance of meaning "good bay," or "good harbour." It can have been nothing but this appearance which led so careful a writer as Harriet Martineau, as well as Outram and many other writers, to gravely assure us that the Portuguese, on discovering the place, and observing the

fine haven in front of it, exclaimed, "Buon Bahia!" ("good bay"). The statement, however, is quite erroneous. The name dates from a period anterior to the arrival of the Portuguese in India. By the natives the name is still written Mambé, and very often Bambé. In the East the initials "B" and "M" are frequently used promiscuously. In the Koran, Mecca is written of as Becca. In Pepys's diary the word is written Bombaim, and soon after Pepys's time it became Bombay. The name is derived from Mambé, and the place is so called because there was on the island a temple dedicated to that goddess. Another instance of an error arising from similarity in sound is in the phrase "setting the Thames on fire." The substitution of the name of a river for the correct word entirely deprives the expression of any meaning, and so general has the error become that, foolish though the mistake is, it is perhaps useless to attempt to restore the true signification of the saying, which like many others is traceable to the domestic pursuits of our forefathers before machinery did so much of their work. Many years ago, before machinery was introduced into flour-mills for the purpose of sifting flour, it was the custom of the miller to send it away unsifted. The process of sifting was done at home, thus: The temse, or sieve, which was moved with a rim that projected from the bottom of it, was worked over the mouth of the barrel into which the flour or meal was sifted. The active fellow, who worked hard, not unfrequently set the rim on fire by force of friction against the rim of the flour-barrel; so that this department of domestic employment became a standard by which to test a man's will and capacity to work hard. Thus, of a lazy fellow, or one deficient in strength, it was said he "will never set the temse on fire." The word is still in common use in Lincolnshire to signify the sieve used by brewers to remove the hops from the beer.

Another instance of a wide-spread error traceable to a phonetic source, was the funny freak played some years ago with the refrain to one of the war anthems of the rebellion in America. "Glory, Glory Hallelujah," was shouted and sung in the streets and concert-halls of England, as was the Jingo chorus a few years ago. There was no connection between the refrain and the verses to which it was attached. What cause for Hallelujah could there be in the

fact that "John Brown's bones lie mouldering in the dust," or that there was a particular number on his knapsack? Those, however, who heard the anthem or marching song in America, or sung by Americans, could at once appreciate the connection of the correct refrain, as the following verse sufficiently shows:

John Brown's bones lie mouldering in the dust,
John Brown's bones lie mouldering in the dust,
John Brown's bones lie mouldering in the dust,
But his soul is marching on.

Glory, glory to the Union,
Glory, glory to the Union,
Glory, glory to the Union,
For his soul is marching on.

The errors in history and geography arising from a slipshod method of ascertaining facts are so numerous and widely spread, that they are to be found even in text-books and standard primers. Almost every school-boy will declare that Mont Blanc is in Switzerland, and will produce his "school-book" in proof of his assertion. A reference, however, to a standard book on geography (Keith Johnston's Geography, 1880), or to a good atlas, will show that Mont Blanc is in France. Again, the introduction of tobacco into England, usually considered one of the main events in the life of Sir Walter Raleigh, will be found by those who care to enquire into the subject to be due to Sir John Hawkins about the year 1565. For the importation of the narcotic in quantity, and for the knowledge of how to smoke it, we are indebted to Captain Ralph Lane. After this the reader will not be surprised to learn that the anecdote which records how Raleigh's servant threw a jug of beer over her master, under the impression that he was on fire when he was only smoking a pipe, is a pure fiction, not associated with Raleigh's name until 1726. The story is told of a Welshman, in *The Irish Hubbub*; or, the English Hue and Cry (A.D. 1619), as follows: "A certaine Welchman comming newly to London, and beholding one to take tobacco, never seeing the like before, and not knowing the manner of it, but perceiving him vent smoke so fast, and supposing his inward parts to be on fire, cried out, 'O, Jhesu, Jhesu man, for the passion of God hold, for by God's splud ty snowt's on fire,' and having a bowle of beere in his hand, threw it at the other's face to quench his smoking nose." A similar story is related of Tarlton in *Tarlton's Jestes* (A.D. 1611). All anecdotes of great men should be received with caution. The person who

declared that his religion was the religion of all sensible men, and on being asked, "What is that?" replied, "All sensible men keep that to themselves," is said to be Talleyrand, Thackeray, and a host of others.

Another error in history to be found in many books even pretending to authority, is that trial by jury was established by King Alfred. A reference to Green's *History of the English People*, Sec. viii., will show that it was not in existence until the reign of Henry the Second. Again, even standard works declare that William the First was surnamed the "Conqueror," because he conquered England; but according to the greatest authority on English law, this circumstance was at best but the penultimate cause of the title given to the Norman warrior. Blackstone explains in his chapter on Title by Purchase that "Purchase, perquisitis, taken in its largest sense, is defined the possession of lands and tenements, which a man hath by his own act or agreement, and not by descent . . . What we call purchase the feudist called conquest, both denoting any means of acquiring an estate otherwise than by inheritance. Hence the appellation given to William the Norman, signifying that he was the first of his family who acquired the crown of England. This is the legal signification of the word purchase."

It is thus seen that in literature, in history, and in geography, the state of knowledge among the general public is anything but exact. It might be shown that in every other department of knowledge the same feature obtains. There is a work on "caulking" which shows that the author does not know how to spell the name of the thing he is writing about, for a reference to *Chambers's Dictionary*, or any other similar standard work, will show that the "u" in "caulk" is as much out of place as it would be in chalk, talk, and walk.

Even men who think themselves educated still imagine that thunderbolts exist in fact, instead of merely in the imagination of the ancients, as is recorded in Homer that Jupiter had

His triple thunder and his bolts of fire.

In comparing the soldierly qualities of Wellington and Napoleon, it is often forgotten that they only met once in battle—viz., on the field of Waterloo. Lord Beaconsfield was jeered at by his oppo-

nents and admired by his friends for the use of the phrase, "Peace with honour," while, as a matter of fact, it was first used, not by him, but to him, in a civic address at Dover, when his lordship landed there on his return from Berlin. Similarly, Mr. Forster has incurred much odium by the addition of "Buckshot" to his name, but it is now known that there was no ground whatever for the opprobrious epithet. Up to this day it is often said that J. S. Mill styled the Conservatives the "stupid party," though what the great philosopher actually said was, "Show me a stupid man, and I will show you a Conservative." Surely even a dull man can see that Mr. Mill might think that all stupid men were Conservatives, without believing that all Conservatives were stupid. Mr. Freeman, the historian, is at last tired of explaining that he never preached the "Perish India" doctrine, and yet hardly a day elapses without his high authority being quoted in support of the doctrine, and himself as author of the phrase. "Double entendre," used as a noun by so many English people, is a simple barbarism, the correct expression being "double entente," as every French scholar is perfectly aware. A serious error often made, both in Parliament and the press, is in the statement that the demand creates the supply, and on the basis of the false theory numberless fallacies are erected. Students of Adam Smith know well enough that although demand affects supply, it does not create it. On the other hand, it is supply that creates the demand. There was no demand for stockings or steam-engines until they were invented—that is, until there was a supply of them.

The above instances of slipshod knowledge show how widely spread is inexactness in almost everything that is talked about and written about. Let it not be thought that the matter is unimportant. "Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good," is an excellent maxim. If the premises of a proposition be false the conclusion cannot be true. Politicians and statesmen, as well as ordinary persons, accept a statement as true, and take it for granted, because almost everybody believes it, and then deduce therefrom the wildest theories, leading unthinking people sadly astray. Who has not heard an orator start with the declaration, "There is no rule without an exception," or "The exception proves the rule," and then argue as if the rule were correct simply because an exception existed? Logicians know, however,

the fallacy of such reasoning. A sound reasoner knows that there is no exception to any rule. If there be what is called an exception, all that is proved is that the rule is not sufficiently comprehensive, or is not properly worded. In these days of verbose speaking and slipshod writing, people will do well first of all to ascertain that even the most trivial matters are correct, before they admit that the conclusions from them are sound. More errors are promulgated by slipshod knowledge, and by taking statements for granted simply because they have been often repeated and are widely believed, than many persons imagine, and it is a wise course to reduce every proposition to a syllogism, with the premises well and carefully established.

A PASSING CLOUD

A STORY.

"VAL, will you take my advice?"

"It depends whether it suits my fancy, dear. Did you ever know anyone take advice otherwise?"

Lady Marchmont laughed. "I am afraid mine will hardly do so in this instance. I would suggest that you take a book and try to read, as the time would pass much quicker if you did not study the clock every five minutes. There is one on that table that could not fail to interest you, it is the story of a fair maid who suffered all the 'pangs, the agonies, the doubts' of a true love, that did not, like yours, run smooth."

"I should probably throw it to the other end of the room after five minutes."

"And to think," said Lady Marchmont meditatively, "to think that six months ago you did not know this hero who is now making such havoc in your peace of mind."

Valérie rose impatiently from her seat, and walked across to the window, a frown ruffling the serenity of her white forehead, and a vexed look in her pretty grey eyes.

She was a tall slender girl, with more claims to beauty than are accorded from the mere possession of regular features and a faultless complexion, which good points many girls will own, and yet be highly uninteresting and unattractive. Val's chief charm lay in her entire unconsciousness of self, in the animated play of her mobile sensitive face, in which, as in her clear grey eyes, was reflected every emotion of her sympathetic nature. She was a girl who from impulse might probably act hastily

or thoughtlessly, but who would be only too ready to own her error if once convinced of it; a rare virtue indeed, for surely the hardest of all concessions is that which avows, "I was wrong."

Val's abrupt movement caused Lady Marchmont to look up enquiringly, and she divined the cause of her displeasure. The young lady had certain peculiar notions of her own, and did not like being joked about her love and her lover, especially before a third person. Ere Lady Marchmont, however, could atone for her indiscretion, another lady present looked up from her lace-work and said quietly:

"Is it not wonderful how ready we women are to trust our happiness and our future in the hands of men, of whom for the most part we know little?"

The speaker was a slight fair woman whose age it would be difficult to guess. She was one of those persons whom one would at first declare to be quite unattractive, and shortly discover that they possess a strange fascination. Whether it was her peculiarly clear low-toned voice, or a certain air of quiet self-possession which nothing seemed to ruffle, it was undeniable that Mrs. Maitland had had her share of admirers, and in this, her third year of widowhood, was said to have received more than one offer to change her apparently not inconsolable state.

Val glanced at her with a slightly contemptuous look in her eyes.

"Your remark has no significance for me, Mrs. Maitland, for I know Captain Dalrymple thoroughly," she said with a happy confidence in her tone. A slight smile played for a moment round Mrs. Maitland's thin lips, and she dropped her eyes again over her work.

"Oh, you think you do," she answered in her quiet tones, which somehow or other generally had the effect of irritating Val, "which does as well—nay, better, for few of us would benefit by an intimate knowledge of the lives of most men."

"The life of every honourable man is the same," returned Val indignantly. "Your experience of the other sex must have been unfortunate, Mrs. Maitland."

There was a slight accession of colour in the widow's usually impassive cheek as she replied in a somewhat sarcastic tone: "I admire, if I do not emulate, your charming confidence, Miss Charteris. I hope you may never have cause to regret it, but I think when you are a few years older you will

acknowledgethat men are all alike, and that self is the guiding star of their existence."

"I refuse to believe it," said Val. "You are welcome to your opinion, Mrs. Maitland; leave me in the enjoyment of mine. There are bad alike in both sexes, but what does it matter if there are worthless men, when the one in whom one trusts and believes is all he should be?" and with this Val turned her back on her antagonist, and dropping into an easy-chair, gave herself up to a mental revision of the virtues of her "*chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*."

What sweet smiles circled her lips, what a happy light shone in her eyes, as she lived over again that brief period of wooing, when the old story, that is ever so new in the telling, was whispered into her willing ears. Oh, bright time of youth and love that comes but once to all, that passes all too swiftly, but which years after has still the power to rekindle a flame in our worn-out weary hearts!

"Val," said Lady Marchmont, breaking in on her reverie, as she bent over her and spoke in a low tone, "where are your thoughts? I hear the dog-cart going round to the front door."

Val brought herself back from a delightful past to a still more delightful present, and sat up in an expectant attitude with sparkling eyes and flushed cheeks.

In a few minutes the door was flung open and Captain Dalrymple was announced. He was a tall, soldierly-looking man, with a grave serious face and dark earnest eyes, which, when he smiled, softened and lit up in a wonderfully attractive manner.

In the presence of the two ladies, Valérie's greeting with him was necessarily restrained, a silent, but expressive pressure of the hands, and Captain Dalrymple turned to Lady Marchmont. "I have to thank you for your great kindness in extending to me your invitation to Val."

"I am only too delighted to see you," answered Lady Marchmont heartily; "and for the rest, you know Val would not have consented to come, if you had not also favoured us with your company."

As she spoke, she half-turned towards Mrs. Maitland with the intention of introducing her, when to Val's astonishment that lady came forward, holding out her hand, as she said with her most fascinating smile:

"There is no need for an introduction, Lady Marchmont; Captain Dalrymple and I are old friends."

Val turned her gaze to her lover's face, and saw there an expression that she could

not exactly fathom. Was it surprise, annoyance, or embarrassment? He seemed for a moment somewhat at a loss for a reply.

"I did not expect to meet you," he said at length.

"The unexpected always happens, you know," replied Mrs. Maitland, laughing.

What did it mean? Val asked herself. That they should be acquainted with each other was not wonderful, but why had Mrs. Maitland been silent on the point towards her, and above all, why should her presence apparently disconcert Vernon in some way?

She had not time to ponder further on the subject, for the next moment Captain Dalrymple turned to her with his attractive smile, under the influence of which Val's disquietude melted instantly. How absurd to worry about such a thing, when of course at the first opportunity Vernon would explain it all! This thought revived her spirits, and when a few minutes later the party was swelled by some other guests staying at the Hall, she was the gayest of the gay, enjoying delightful little asides with Captain Dalrymple which enabled her totally to forget the existence of Mrs. Maitland.

"Meet me in the drawing-room before anyone is down," she whispered to him as they separated to dress for dinner.

"All right, darling," he replied as he smiled down on her with those eloquent dark eyes that had won her heart's allegiance.

Captain Dalrymple performed his toilet in a very short space of time, and repaired at once to the drawing-room, there to await Val. He wandered into the conservatory and paced about restlessly. One of the glass doors opening close by him caused him to turn quickly with a smile of welcome on his lips, when to his utter surprise he found himself confronted by Mrs. Maitland.

She came quickly forward with the quiet gliding walk which was peculiar to her, but her habitual self-possession seemed strangely ruffled.

"I must apologise for thus intruding on you," she said, "but there was something I wish particularly to ask you."

"Indeed!" returned Captain Dalrymple. His voice had taken its coldest intonation, his face wore its gravest aspect.

"Don't look at me like that, Vernon, as though my presence were so utterly distasteful to you," she went on with some agitation, whether real or feigned he could not determine. "I shall not detain you

long. What I want to ask of you is that you will not mention to Miss Charteris what took place between us a year ago."

"Do you think it likely, Mrs. Maitland, I should mention the subject?"

"Not intentionally, perhaps, but these things come out sometimes unawares, and I could not bear to be subjected to Miss Charteris's ridicule and scorn."

"You need, I assure you, have no fear. I shall be silent on that score."

"You will give me your sacred promise to that effect, will you not?" she said eagerly.

He looked at her in surprise. "I fail to understand you, Mrs. Maitland, but since my simple assurance does not satisfy you, I am quite willing to pledge you my word."

As he spoke the drawing-room door opened softly and Val appeared on the threshold. The room was a very long one, and Dalrymple, standing in the conservatory with his back turned that way, did not see or hear her. Not so Mrs. Maitland. True she did not glance in the direction, but she knew perfectly well who had entered.

She dropped her voice, but advanced a few steps nearer to him.

"I cannot thank you sufficiently," she said, looking at him most eloquently; "you do not know what a weight you have lifted from my mind."

As she spoke, she took both his hands in hers, and giving them a tender pressure, turned, and disappeared through the door by which she had entered, leaving Captain Dalrymple gazing after her with a very perplexed countenance.

"What is the meaning of this?" he pondered. "I never could fathom that woman. How unfortunate she should be here now."

Ere he turned to re-enter the drawing-room, Val, who had stood at the open door motionless during these few minutes, slowly drew it to after her, and crept upstairs again, with a strange chill at her heart.

Mrs. Maitland likewise hastened to regain her room.

"How well I calculated," she murmured to herself, a triumphant light shining in her cold blue eyes; "that was a good move of mine. I knew she would want some explanation with her lover relative to our meeting. She will be still more anxious for it now, and he will refuse to give it, for he has promised, and Vernon Dalrymple never goes back from his word. How I hate that girl with her confidence and pride in his love! Let us see if her trust of

which she boasts will stand her now in good stead. Who knows but what I may win him yet? At any rate I shall make her suffer."

Meanwhile Vernon, as yet in happy ignorance of the trouble Fate was preparing for him, had given up all hope of his tête-à-tête with Val, as one after another the guests assembled in the drawing-room, she only making her appearance a few minutes before dinner was announced. At the first touch of her fingers on his arm as they went in to dinner, he felt that something was wrong. He glanced at her earnestly, but her face was averted.

"What made you forget your appointment with me, dear?" he asked in low tones as they seated themselves at table.

"I did not forget," answered Val, scorning to make an excuse.

"No?" in some surprise. "I suppose something detained you then. I will forgive you this time, but I don't know that I shall be so lenient again," and he smiled tenderly down on her. To his dismay it won no response.

Val had not yet recovered from the unpleasant shock her feelings had received, but she was too angry, too puzzled to clearly define her thoughts; she was chiefly conscious of an intense hatred and jealousy of Mrs. Maitland. It was scarcely wonderful that she should be silent and abstracted during dinner, but the party was too large and too animated for this to be noticed save by two of its members.

"Dalrymple," said Sir Harry Marchmont, claiming that gentleman's attention, "I was introduced to-day to a brother of yours. Did you know he was in these parts?"

"My brother Hubert, I suppose? I remember now his telling me he was going to stay with some friends of his, the Sinclairs, but I did not know their place was near here."

"Only half an hour's drive," returned Sir Harry. "He's a confoundedly handsome fellow—I should say a great favourite with the fair sex. I asked him over to breakfast to-morrow and to spend the day. He told me he had not yet made the acquaintance of his future sister-in-law."

"No, to be sure. Hubert is the only one of us you don't know," said Vernon, turning to Val. "I think you will like him. He's an awfully good-natured fellow, a little spoilt perhaps, but, according to Sir Harry, that is hardly to be wondered at."

Val's face, however, plainly expressed

entire indifference to Hubert Dalrymple's merits or demerits.

When the gentlemen returned to the drawing-room, Dalrymple made his way at once to Val, who was sitting somewhat apart, and bending over her, said in a low tone:

"What is amiss with you, dear? You do not seem yourself this evening."

It was likely, Val thought, that she should be herself, when she had seen that creature, as she inwardly designated Mrs. Maitland, standing by his side, holding his hands, and making eyes at him positively as though she had the right to do so! She could bear it no longer, she must have an explanation at once, she resolved.

"Come out on the terrace," she said, rising impetuously. "I want to speak to you."

He followed her obediently, and when they were beyond sight or hearing of anyone, said gently:

"Well, what is troubling you, dear?"

"What is there between you and Mrs. Maitland?" asked Val, fixing her clear glance on him, as she abruptly plunged "in medias res."

Captain Dalrymple regarded her in unfeigned astonishment. "What is there between Mrs. Maitland and me?" he repeated slowly. "My dear Val, I don't understand you."

"And I don't understand you," hotly responded the young lady. "You cannot deny, Vernon, that when you met Mrs. Maitland, you looked very—very taken aback."

"I have no wish to deny anything, Val," he answered; "it is true I was somewhat surprised to see Mrs. Maitland."

"But why should you be more surprised to see her than any other acquaintance?"

Dalrymple heaved a faint sigh; matters were getting serious.

"My dear Val," he said half-playfully, "you are surely not going to quarrel with me on account of Mrs. Maitland. I did not think you were given to jealousy."

"Jealousy!" repeated Val, giving her disturbed feelings full vent. "I have a right to be jealous, I think, when I see another woman, whom I did not even know to be acquainted with you, holding an interview with you of apparently a most intimate nature."

So here was the explanation of Val's conduct! Dalrymple looked, what he felt, thoroughly aghast.

"I see," he said after a moment's pause,

"that you have more cause for annoyance than I imagined. If I cannot give you a very full explanation of what I am aware must appear strange in your eyes, I am sure your confidence in me will enable you to accept without hesitation what I am going to say. I have known Mrs. Maitland for years, and she wished to speak to me alone on a matter that concerns herself."

"And it was necessary to the communication that she should hold your hands?" asked Val sarcastically.

Dalrymple looked at her with his searching eyes.

"I see what is in your mind, Val," he answered quietly, "but I can hardly believe that you can mistrust me thus, that you can wrong yourself and insult me by such suspicions. Were I free to do so, I would willingly explain all, but unfortunately I am not."

"Because you have promised her not to do so, I suppose?" returned Val, her eyes flashing; "and a promise to her is to rank before consideration of my feelings. After what I witnessed this evening I have a right to demand a full explanation, and I will accept that or none." Saying which she reared her head with the dignity of a queen, and left Captain Dalrymple alone to ponder over the unforeseen dilemma in which he found himself placed.

The flush of anger still lingered on Val's cheek as she re-entered the room, and Mrs. Maitland noting it with her watchful eyes, smiled maliciously as she said to herself: "I score the first points in the game."

Val awoke the next morning with a dull aching pain at her heart, the cause of which she only too soon remembered. Of trouble of any kind she had hitherto had no experience, and she felt quite overwhelmed at the dreary prospect before her should she continue her quarrel with Vernon. Why not put an end to it, she asked herself, and trust him, as she had been so ready to declare she could do under any circumstances? Then the thought that he had a secret with Mrs. Maitland, which was unshared by her, obtruded itself, and she grew obdurate again.

She remained in her room till summoned by the breakfast-bell, and then slipped into a place at table which hid her from Vernon's sight.

Hubert Dalrymple was of the party. He was certainly very handsome, with dark eyes, which wore a languid sleepy look in them very well suited to his style. For all that, he was observant, and could see

as much with his half-closed eyes as most people with theirs wide open, and he had not been many minutes at table ere he perceived something was seriously wrong between his brother and his betrothed.

Breakfast over he approached Val, and said with a smile wonderfully like Vernon's:

"Come for a stroll with me, will you? As we are so soon to be related it is only natural I should wish to be better acquainted with you."

Val was fain to consent. She was only too anxious to escape from Vernon's presence; the misery of being with him and yet estranged from him was more than she could bear.

After wandering about for awhile, Hubert making vain attempts to amuse Val with his light talk, they seated themselves on a shady bench, and the former said without further preface:

"What is there wrong between you and Vernon?"

Val flushed crimson. "I don't understand you," she said.

"Don't you?" answered Hubert in his lazy tones. "I should have thought my meaning pretty clear. I'm not a very clever fellow, Miss Charteris, but it did not require very bright wits to discover there was something amiss."

Val made no rejoinder, in truth she was experiencing some difficulty in keeping from tears.

"I think it such a pity for people to fall out about trifles," proceeded Hubert, "for knowing Vernon as I do, I can't believe he can have given you any real cause for complaint. There's not a better fellow breathing than he; I, as his brother, ought to be able to give an opinion on the subject."

Still Val sat silent; she felt half-inclined to be angry with this officious young man for his interference in her private affairs, but somehow, in spite of all, it was so sweet to hear Vernon praised.

"You won't be offended with me, I hope, if I tell you I think you are very lucky to have won his love," continued Mr. Dalrymple, in no way discomposed at having all the talk to himself. "Vernon's not like me, you know. I can't help spooning every pretty girl I come across, but with him, you are just the first woman he has ever loved or spoken to of love."

Val turned to him eagerly. "Are you sure—quite sure?"

Mr. Dalrymple laid his handsome head back against the tree, and surveyed her from under his half-closed lids with an expression of amusement. "I think I see

light at last," he mused; "the little girl is jealous—I fancy I know of whom."

"Quite sure," he said aloud; "but that has not prevented many women being in love with him. There's a certain lady, not a dozen miles from here, who tried very hard to win him."

"Do you mean Mrs. Maitland?" asked Val in a low hurried tone.

"What makes you guess that?"

"Because—oh, because I have been very unhappy through her," said Val, clasping her hands together with a pathetic little gesture, her grey eyes full of tears.

"Tell me all about it," responded Hubert tenderly, and to Val's surprise she found herself detailing her grievance to this young man, who an hour ago had been unknown to her. As she concluded she was somewhat taken aback at Mr. Dalrymple's giving vent to a hearty fit of laughter.

"How deep the little widow is," he said; "but I see her game. She thought to make a quarrel between you and Vernon and perhaps gain his heart in the rebound. Valérie, you really deserve to know the truth, especially after confiding in me. Listen to me. A year ago, Mrs. Maitland, reversing the general order of things, made an offer to Vernon of her hand, heart, and very ample fortune."

"Impossible!" ejaculated Val.

"Not impossible—unusual, if you like," answered Hubert dryly. "We have known her for years, and she was always awfully sweet on Vernon. When she became her own mistress again, she began running after him in the old fashion, and last year—we were all staying together at some house—she spoke out pretty plainly."

"However do you know?" asked Val.

"Because I, by chance, interrupted the interesting tête-à-tête, and guessed from the lady's agitation what had taken place. When I taxed Vernon with it afterwards he could not deny it, but naturally, on her account, he would think himself in honour bound never to mention it, for she must have been very genuinely in love with him to go such lengths. Wasn't it awkward for him?" wound up Hubert. "If it had happened to me, I should have accepted her, for I can never refuse a woman anything."

Val caught his hands impetuously in hers.

"How can I thank you," she said, the happy smiles playing again round her lips.

"I was so angry, so miserable, I did not know what to think, and now everything is delightful again. Vernon said I should like you, and I do, tremendously."

"Thanks," returned Hubert, laughing, "I am glad to be able to return the compliment. And now don't you think you had better make your peace with Vernon, or you will have a certain fair lady carrying tales to him about the violent flirtation we are indulging in."

A few minutes later, Vernon, sitting alone in the library, apparently engaged in writing letters, but with a preoccupied air that boded ill for his correspondence, felt two soft arms steal round his neck, and Val's sweet voice said in his ear:

"Can you ever forgive me, dear, for being such a horrid suspicious wretch? I was so wrong, so very wrong, but I punished myself more than any one."

Vernon's face brightened as he drew her tenderly to him.

"You have made up your mind to trust me in spite of appearances, Val?" he asked.

She hid her glowing face on his shoulder.

"I must tell you all," she whispered, "and don't despise me very much, dear." And she proceeded to recount her conversation with Hubert.

"Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner—eh, Val?" he said with a slight smile; "but there, I won't tease you, dear. It was hardly surprising you were vexed, and wanted to know all, and I think I need not ask you to keep silent on the score of what you have heard."

"I promise," said Val, feeling in her newly-recovered happiness that she could pardon Mrs. Maitland all her misdoings, since it was love for Vernon which had prompted her to them.

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